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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 000966

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [KISL](#) [KIRF](#) [SA](#) [VT](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDI KING ABDULLAH TO ATTEND UN INTERFAITH
DIALOGUE NOVEMBER 12, 13; STEERING COMMITTEE TO BE
ESTABLISHED.

REF: A. 08USUNNEWYORK898

[1](#)B. 08VATICAN77

[1](#)C. 08MADRID799

USUN NEW Y 00000966 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Saudi ambassador Al-Jubeir told Ambassador Khalilzad that King Abdullah will attend the Saudi-backed UNGA high-level meeting scheduled for November 12 and 13 in New York, and requested US support for the interfaith meeting. Al-Jubeir noted that misunderstandings in the "draft" statement issued by the Saudi sponsored Madrid Interfaith Dialogue Conference were being clarified with the Holy See, and said he expected a final version to be agreed upon shortly. Al-Jubeir introduced Dr. Rayed Krimly, who will remain in New York to complete preparations for the conference and work on the UN statement. Al-Jubeir also appealed for President Bush's attendance at the conference, emphasizing that his presence would send a strong signal of support for interfaith understanding. Al-Jubeir proposed the UN statement and the establishment of a religious steering committee as conference deliverables. End Summary.

Potential attendees and request for President Bush's involvement

[1](#)2. (C) Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel Al-Jubeir told Ambassador Khalilzad October 20 that King Abdullah would attend the Saudi-backed UN conference on interfaith dialogue scheduled for November 12 and 13 in New York. Al-Jubeir noted that Jordan's King Abdullah, and the Presidents of Finland, Pakistan and the Philippines had agreed to attend. He added that the Prime Minister of India may attend, and that he expected two to three heads of state each from Europe and South America. Any more, he confided, would be too much. Al-Jubeir requested US support for the conference, and made a special plea for President Bush to attend, noting his presence would send a powerful signal to the world.

Conference Deliverables

[1](#)3. (C) Al-Jubeir outlined plans for the conference to produce a very general UN statement, not a resolution, that would take note of and encourage the dialogue initiated by the Madrid Interfaith Dialogue Conference. The statement would confirm the value of bringing together different cultures and faiths, in accordance with the UN Charter.

Al-Jubeir said the conference would send the important message that all religions are based on shared universal values. Having the UN call attention to these values would help drown out religious extremists, he emphasized, given the great respect many have for the UN as a food security and education provider. Muslim participation in particular is important, he added, as participants would return home to spread a message of tolerance.

¶4. (C) Al-Jubeir also introduced Special Envoy Dr. Rayed Krimly, who will remain in New York to work on conference preparations and to develop the UN statement. Ambassador Khalilzad welcomed Dr. Krimly, adding that USUN would work closely with him on drafting the statement. In an aside to PolOff, Krimly noted only UN member states would be invited to attend the conference, given how &tricky8 the process of selecting various religious groups to attend could become. He also added that the conference was not designed to be a continuation of the Madrid dialogue, but an opportunity for an international seal of approval for future talks.

¶5. (C) Al-Jubeir also described the establishment of an independent steering committee, not affiliated with the UN, composed of self-chosen religious representatives. The committee would be endowed to ensure independence, have a rotating presidency, and would determine it's own agenda. It's purpose would be to continue the interfaith dialogue process, building upon the Madrid Conference.

Madrid Declaration not yet finalized

¶6. (C) Al-Jubeir said the Madrid Declaration existed only in draft, due to a misunderstanding with the Holy See on what

USUN NEW Y 00000966 002.2 OF 002

had been agreed upon at the Madrid Conference. He said the Saudis were continuing the dialogue with the Holy See to address their concerns and expected a finalized version shortly. Al-Jubeir said language referring to processes which adversely affect religious freedom would be removed, adding that Dr. Krimly would be consulting with Holy See Permanent Observer Archbishop Migliore for further discussion. Khalilzad